

MESSINES  
AND OTHER POEMS

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**BELGIAN POEMS CHANTS PA  
TRIOTIQUES ET AUTRES  
POÈMES ENGLISH TRANS-  
LATIONS BY TITA BRAND-  
CAMMAERTS WITH A POR-  
TRAIT BY VERNON HILL**

*THIRD EDITION*

**NEW BELGIAN POEMS LES  
TROIS ROIS ET AUTRES  
POÈMES ENGLISH TRANS-  
LATIONS BY TITA BRAND-  
CAMMAERTS WITH A POR-  
TRAIT BY H G RIVIERE**

**THROUGH THE IRON BARS  
ILLUSTRATED BY LOUIS  
RAEMAERKERS**

**THE BODLEY HEAD**

MESSINES AND OTHER  
POEMS    *♦   ♦   ♦   ♦   ♦*

By EMILE CAMMAERTS  
ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BY  
TITA BRAND-CAMMAERTS

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY: MCMXVIII

## PREFACE

THE verses published in this collection were written from Easter 1916 to August 1917.

According to the method adopted in our previous volumes the translations merely aim at giving a somewhat rhythmic rendering of the French free verse without any attempt at regularity.

Most of the following poems appeared in *Land and Water*; others in the *Observer*, *Daily Telegraph*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Yale Review*, and *Country Life*. We wish to thank the editors of these publications for their kindness in allowing us to reprint them here.

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MESSINES  
AND OTHER POEMS

# L'AÎEULE

[DEDICACE]

DEPUIS que je vis de souvenirs,  
Ton image ne me quitte pas  
Je devine ton éternel sourire,  
J'entends le bruit chancelant de tes pas  
Je revois, sur le dossier du fauteuil,  
Ton visage creusé de rides,  
Et, reposant sur ta robe de deuil,  
Tes vieilles mains, lasses et vides

Tes doigts trop faibles pour tricoter,  
Tes yeux vagues et incertains,  
Tes gestes d'accueil et de bonte,  
Toute l'éloquence menue et tumide  
De ton cœur trop plein  
Et de tes mains lasses et vides

Et, dans le silence de la salle,  
Quand tu te crois seule,  
Ta prière pieuse et banale,  
Tournant et tournant, comme une meule,  
Et broyant ton espoir si fin  
Que le sort le plus aride



# THE GRANDMOTHER

[DEDICATION]

SINCE I live on memories,  
Your image is with me everywhere ;  
I feel your never-failing smile,  
I hear your steps' unsteady sound,  
I see your dear old furrowed face  
Against the arm-chair back,  
And, resting on your mourning dress,  
Your old, tired, empty hands. . . .

Your fingers too weak for knitting,  
Your eyes misty and dim,  
Your movements of greeting and kindness,  
All the shy and timid eloquence  
Of your full, overflowing heart  
And your old tired, empty hands. . . .

And, in the stillness of the room,  
When you believe yourself alone,  
That old and hackneyed prayer,  
Turning and turning like a mill,  
Grinding your hope so fine  
That even the hardest hearted fate

Ne peut s'empêcher d'en laisser quelques grains  
Entre tes mains lasses et vides

O, les vieilles, les chères vieilles qui n'osent  
pas parler,  
Qui se rongent, dans leur coin, la tête sur le  
côté,  
En songeant à ceux qu'elles ont vu partir  
Et qui tardent tant à revenir !

Must surely drop some kindly grains  
Into your tired, empty hands. . . .

Oh, the aged, the dear aged, who dare not  
    speak,  
Who fret in their corner with head on one  
    side,  
Thinking of those they saw depart,  
Who are so long in coming back again !

# EPITAPHE

A la mémoire du sergent Jacques Bouvier tué devant Dixmude  
à l'âge de 23 ans, alors qu'il portait secours à un de ses camarades  
enseveli sous les ruines de son abri

Il n'est pas mort

Il est parti

Il a forcé la porte de sa vie

Il a franchi

D'un bond le seuil de son sort

Il n'est pas mort

Il est sorti

D'un monde qui était trop petit pour lui

Couvrez le tambour d'un voile noir

Couvrez son corps

Du drapeau de la Victoire

Il n'a pas eu comme d'autres la patience

D'attendre jusqu'au bout

Il n'a pas eu comme d'autres la prudence

De boire à petits coups

Il n'est pas mort

Il est parti

Il a vidé sa coupe jusqu'à la lie

Il a franchi

# EPITAPH

To the Memory of Sergeant Jacques Bouvier, aged 23, killed at Dixmude, while relieving a comrade buried under his dug-out, in an advanced post.

He is not dead.

He has gone away.

He has forced the gate of his life.

He has crossed at one bound

The threshold of his fate.

He is not dead.

He has gone away

From a world which was much too small for him.

Cover the drum with a black veil.

Cover his body

With Victory's flag.

He had not the patience, as others have,

To wait until the end.

He had not the wisdom, as others have,

To drink by little sips.

He is not dead.

He has gone away.

He has emptied his cup to the very dregs.

He has crossed at one bound

D'un bond, le seuil de son sort  
Il a fait, d'un geste, tout ce qu'il avait à faire,  
Il a dit, d'un mot, tout ce qu'il avait à dire,  
Il a livré sa guerre  
Et souffert son martyre

Battez le tambour à petits coups las,  
Portez son corps  
A petits pas

Il n'est pas mort,  
Mais nous mourrons  
Chaque fois que nous songerons à lui  
Et que nous nous souviendrons  
Que nous ne l'avons pas survu  
Il n'est pas mort,  
Mais nous vivrons  
Bien des jours et bien des nuits  
Sans jamais voir la porte d'or  
Qui s'est ouverte devant lui

Plantez une croix sur son tombeau—  
Il n'est pas mort—  
Gravez son nom, son numéro,  
Et tirez sur son corps  
La salve des héros !

The threshold of his fate.  
He did in one movement all he had to do ;  
He said in one word all he had to say ;  
He has fought his fight  
And suffered his martyrdom.

Beat the drum with muffled taps ;  
Bear his body  
With shortened steps.

He is not dead,  
But we shall die  
Each time we think of him,  
And we remember  
That we remain behind.  
He is not dead,  
But we shall live  
Many days and many nights  
Without seeing the golden gates  
Which have opened wide to him.

Plant a cross upon his tomb—  
He is not dead—  
Engrave his number and his name,  
And fire, o'er his body,  
The heroes' last salute !

# LE DERNIER CROISÉ

*Pâques, 1916*

(Après la première Bataille de Gaza)

Tommy veille au pied du Calvaire,  
La brise souffle de Syrie,  
—Depuis combien de temps ont ils scellé la  
pierre ?—

Tommy veille, Tommy prie,  
Dans la nuit brune, sur la terre brune, Tommy  
Brun khaki

Avez vous vu briller sa bayonette  
Au clair de lune ?

La croix aiguë de sa bayonette  
Claire au clair de lune ?

—Depuis combien de temps L'ont ils enferme  
là ?—

Tommy courbe la tête,  
Son âme veille, son corps est las

Qu'attend il, brun dans la nuit brune  
Sous la brise syrienne ?

Qu'attend il, au pied de la croix,  
Sous le croissant de la lune ?

Est ce—que ses frères reviennent



# THE LAST CRUSADER

*Easter, 1916*

(After the first Battle of Gaza)

TOMMY watches at the foot of Calvary,  
The breeze blows from the Syrian plain,  
—How long is it since they have set the seals?—  
Tommy watches, Tommy prays,  
In the brown night, on the brown earth  
Brown Tommy in khaki. . . .

Did you see his bayonet gleam  
In the moonlight?  
The sharp cross of his bayonet gleam  
Bright in the moonlight?  
—How long is it since they have laid Him  
there?—

Tommy bows his head,  
His soul watches, but weary are his limbs.

What is he waiting for, brown in the brown  
night,  
In the Syrian breeze?  
What is he waiting for, at the foot of the Cross,  
Beneath the crescent moon?  
Is it for his brothers' return—

Richard, Robert, Louis, et Godefroid ?

—Depuis combien de temps L'ont ils enfermé  
là ?—

Le sépulcre est tout proche où ils L'ont enterré,  
Et le jardin de Joseph d'Armathie  
Sous la lune en croissant, Christ est ressuscité  
Et sa croix brille

Entre les mains calleuses du dernier Croisé,  
Entre les mains calleuses et brunes

D'un ouvrier

—Est ce le voile de Madeleine qui flotte dans la  
brume ?—

Tommy écoute une cloche qui tinte,

Tinte, tinte dans son village

C'est Pâques ici et Pâques là bas

La lune soudain s'est éteinte

Derrière un nuage

—Depuis combien de temps L'ont ils enfermé là ?

Dites, Richard Robert, Louis, et Godefroid ?—

La nuit se passe et l'aube pointe,

Les merles sifflent dans les haies d'Elstree

Tommy veille, Tommy rêve, Tommy prie

La brise souffle de Syrie

—Depuis combien de temps ont ils scelle la  
pierre ?—

Dites le nous, Tommy, au pied du Calvaire

Mais Tommy ne répond pas, Tommy prie,

Dans la nuit rose, sur la terre mauve, Tommy

Brun khaki

Richard, Robert, Louis and Godfrey ?

—How long is it since they laid Him there ?—

The sepulchre is near to which they carried Him,  
And the Garden of Joseph of Arimathea.

Beneath the crescent moon, Christ has risen again  
And His Cross gleams

In the horny hands of the last Crusader,

In the brown, horny hands

Of a workman.

—Is it Magdalen's cloak which flutters in the  
mist ?—

Tommy hears a church bell chiming,

Chiming, chiming in his village.

It is Easter here and Easter there.

Behind the clouds.

The moon has disappeared.

—How long is it since they laid Him there ?

Say Richard, Robert, Louis, and Godfrey ?—

The night is passing, the dawn breaks,

In Elstree a blackbird whistles in a hedge.

Tommy watches, Tommy dreams, Tommy prays.

The breeze blows from the Syrian plains.

—How long is it since they set the seals ?—

Tell us, Tommy, at the foot of Calvary . . .

But Tommy does not answer, Tommy prays,

In the pink dawn, on the purple earth,

Brown Tommy in khaki.

# DANS LES COTSWOLDS

*Mai, 1916*

A HUGH RIVIERE

O L'ÉTERNITÉ auguste de la terre !

Combien de printemps, combien d'étés,  
Combien d'automnes, combien d'hivers,  
Se sont inlassablement succédé  
Sur ces sommets austères ?  
Les Saxons ont passé par là  
Et les Romains et leurs " castra,"  
Les Normands et les Cavaliers,  
Par ces mêmes routes, ces mêmes sentiers  
Que nous foulons d'un pied distrait,  
Et la pluie cinglait leur poitrine,  
Et le vent fouettait leur visage,  
Tandis qu'ils arpentaient ces mêmes collines  
Et que, couronnées d'une guirlande de  
nuages,  
Surgissaient au loin les crêtes ébréchées  
Des montagnes galloises,  
Et que brillait, comme un éclair,

# THE COTSWOLDS

*May, 1916*

TO HUGH RIVIERE

O WONDERFUL eternity of earth !

How many springs, how many summers,  
How many autumns, how many winters,  
Have followed each other untiringly  
Upon these stern hill-tops ?  
The Saxons passed by here,  
And the Romans with their "castra,"  
The Normans and the merry Cavaliers,  
By these same roads, these self-same paths  
We follow now with careless feet ;  
And the rain lashed their breasts,  
And the wind whipped their faces,  
While they climbed these same hills,  
And while, crowned with a wreath of  
clouds,  
Rose the distant jagged crests  
Of the Welsh mountain ranges,  
And while, in its muddy bed,

Entre ses rives d'e vase,  
La Severn, au fond de son large estuaire

O l'éternité auguste de la terre !

C'est un Dimanche de Mai  
Dans la plaine,  
Les églises tintent leur prière  
C'est un beau matin de Mai  
La tour de Gloucester égraine  
Le chapelet de ses notes claires ,  
Elle trône comme une reine  
Sur son chevet,  
Et Witcombe et Birdlip et Cheltenham, là bas,  
S'éveillent, tour à tour,  
Pour lui faire la cour ,  
Et les oiseaux, autour de moi,  
—Merles, pinsons, alouettes,—  
Et les ruisseaux et toutes les fleurs,  
—Primevères, jacinthes, violettes,—  
Et la brise à travers le bois  
Répondent en chœur  
A l'écho de sa voix

O l'humilité touchante de l'homme,  
Tout ce que nous voudrions être et le peu que  
    nous sommes,  
Et le calme invincible de ce jour de printemps,  
Et la force obstinée et le dur entêtement  
De cette vie qui continue quand même,

The flashing Severn gleamed  
Between its widening banks.

O wonderful eternity of earth !

It is a clear May Sunday. On the plain  
The churches ring their prayers.  
A beautiful May morning.  
*Gloucester Tower tells its beads*  
In clear firm notes ;  
It rises o'er its nave  
Like a queen enthroned,  
And Witcombe and Birdlip and Cheltenham,  
    *down there,*  
Awaken one by one  
To pay her their court ;  
And the birds around me,  
—Thrushes, finches, larks,—  
And the streams and all the flowers,  
—Primroses, bluebells, violets,—  
And the breeze across the woods  
Answer in chorus  
To the echo of her voice.

O touching humility of man,  
All that we would be and the little we are,  
And the o'erwhelming calm of this spring  
    day,  
And the obstinate force, hard stubbornness  
Of this life, continuing all the same

Comme si de rien n'était,  
Avec tous ses vieux thèmes,  
Ses vieux espoirs, ses vieilles misères,  
Et la superbe insolence  
De son inconscience

O l'éternité auguste de la terre !



As if naught were happening,  
With all its old themes,  
Old hopes, old miseries,  
And the superb insolence  
Of its unconsciousness. . . .

O wonderful eternity of earth !

# LES JACINTHES

*Mai, 1916*

LE ciel est tombé par terre !

Il y en a tant  
Sous les bouleaux blancs,  
Tant sous les frênes gris,  
Qu'on ne voit plus le vert des tiges  
Il y en a tant et tant et tant—  
Frisson d'amour, printemps fleur—  
Que le vertige  
Vous saisit  
Il y en a tant qu'on ne peut plus  
Marcher sans marcher dessus  
Il y en a tant qui dansent  
Et qui rient  
Qu'on ne sait plus  
Où le ciel commence  
Et où la terre finit

Le ciel est tombé par terre !

Il fait si bleu  
Sous les frênes gris,

# THE BLUEBELLS

*May, 1916*

THE sky has fallen upon the ground

There are so many  
'Neath the birches white,  
So many 'neath the ash-trees grey,  
That we cannot see the stalks of green.  
There are so many, many, many—  
Quiver of love, spring-time flowers—  
That you are overcome  
With dizziness.

There are so many, we cannot walk  
A step without treading upon them.  
So many that dance  
And that laugh  
That we cannot tell  
Where the sky begins  
And where the earth doth end.

The sky has fallen upon the ground !

It is so blue  
Beneath the ash-trees grey,

Il fait si bleu sous les grands hêtres—  
Frisson d'amour, printemps fleuri—  
Qu'on croirait être  
En Paradis  
Il fait plus bleu que les crevasstes  
De la Mer de Glace,  
Plus bleu que les lacs d'Italie,  
Plus bleu que les yeux  
Des Bienheureux

Un homme est tombé par terre !

Il est couché  
Parmi les jacinthes, les bras en croix,  
Son kepi a roulé  
A quelques pas de là  
Il a un petit trou rond  
Au milieu du front  
Il dort d'un profond sommeil  
Et sa tête, sur la mousse  
Dans son auréole rousse,  
Luit comme un soleil

It is so blue beneath the great beech-trees—  
Quiver of love, spring-time flowers—  
You'd think yourself  
In Paradise.  
It is bluer than a crevasse  
Of an Alpine glacier ;  
Bluer than Italian lakes,  
Bluer than the eyes  
Of the Blessed. . . .

A man has fallen upon the ground !

He lies among the bluebells  
And his arms form a cross ;  
His cap has rolled  
Some steps away.  
There is a small round hole  
In the middle of his brow.  
He sleeps a deep, deep sleep.  
And his head, on the moss,  
With its red aureole,  
Gleams like a sun. . . .

# VERDUN

*Juillet 1916*

La neige saupoudre les collines,  
La glace frange les ruisseaux,  
Les bois découpent leurs ombres fines—  
Vert des sapins, brun des bouleaux—  
La Terre dort sous un ciel sourd,  
La Meuse  
Noire murmure une berceuse  
Et Verdun tient toujours

Avril sourit sur les collines,  
La crue gonfle les ruisseaux,  
Les buissons chantent, les bois s'animent—  
Noir des sapins, jaune des bouleaux—  
La Terre fait un rêve d'amour,  
La Meuse  
Bleue roule ses eaux funeuses  
Et Verdun tient toujours

Le soleil inonde les collines,  
Les prés en fleurs et les ruisseaux,  
Sous la feuillée, l'abeille butine—  
Vert des sapins, vert des bouleaux—

## VERDUN

*July, 1916*

THE snow is powdering the hills,  
The ice fringes the streams,  
The trees show every delicate branch—  
Green of fir and brown of birch—  
The Earth sleeps under a deaf sky.  
The black Meuse  
Murmurs a lullaby . . .  
And Verdun still holds out.

Apr'l smiles upon the hills,  
The thaw swells the streams,  
The bushes sing, the woods awake—  
Black of fir and birches gold—  
The Earth dreams a dream of love,  
The blue Meuse  
Rolls its waters wild . . .  
And Verdun still holds out.

The sunshine floods the hills,  
The fields in flower, and the streams ;  
Under the trees the bees hum loud—  
Green of fir and birches green—

La Terre se pame au bras du Jour,  
La Meuse  
Claire démêle ses boucles langoureuses  
Et Verdun tient toujours

Lutz est tombée, Kolomé,   
Asiago et Posina—  
La Terre mange ses conquérants—  
La Boisselle tombe et Montauban,  
Dompierre tombe et Becquincourt—  
Tandis que, là bas, la Meuse  
Rouge berce ses eaux trompeuses  
Mais Verdun tient toujours !



The Earth lies faint in the arms of Day,  
The clear Meuse  
Combs her winding curls . . .  
And Verdun, still holds out.

Lutz is fallen and Kolomea,  
Asiago and Posina—  
The Earth eats up her conquerors—  
La Boisselle falls and Montauban,  
Dompierre falls and Becquincourt—  
While, below there, the red Meuse  
Rocks her treacherous waves . . .  
But Verdun still holds out.

# ILLUSIONS

*Août, 1916*

LE chat s'aiguise les griffes au tronc du vieux  
pommier,  
Une pomme verte tombe sur le gazon ,  
Rien ne vaut un clair matin d'été  
Pour se créer des illusions

De gros nuages blancs, par dessus les sapins,  
Dressent leurs cimes neigeuses ,  
Du linge, sur une corde, au bout du jardin,  
Bat de l'aile dans la brise riieuse

Les figues mûrissent contre le mur,  
Les roses escaladent le vieux colombier ,  
La haut, un avion passe à folle allure,  
Les hirondelles virent autour de la cheminée

Et, sur l'herbe, une petite fille—  
Robe rose, parasol blanc,  
Boucles cendrées et mollets bruns—sautille  
Autour d'une voiture d'enfant

# ILLUSIONS

*August, 1916*

THE cat is sharpening her claws on the trunk of  
an old apple-tree,  
An apple falls upon the grass ;  
There is nothing like a bright summer morning  
For dreaming idle dreams.

Big white clouds above the pines  
Raise their snowy crests ;  
Some linen on a line down the garden  
Flaps its wings in the laughing breeze.

The figs are ripening on the wall,  
The roses climb up the old dovecot ;  
Above, an aeroplane flies madly by,  
The swallows dip and swirl around the chimney-  
pots.

And on the grass a little girl—  
Pink dress, white parasol,  
Brown curls, and sunburnt legs—  
Hops around a baby-carriage.

Le chien happe une mouche posée sur son  
    museau,  
L'enfant rit aux éclats, la tête renversée,  
De la fenêtre, une voix de femme lui fait écho  
Tout est paisible, en ce monde, tout est bon !  
Rien ne vaut vraiment un clair matin d'été  
Pour se créer des illusions !

The dog snaps at a fly upon his nose,  
The child laughs loud, with head thrown back ;  
From the window a woman's voice answers it.  
All is peaceful in this world, everything is  
good ! . . .  
There is surely nothing like a bright summer  
morning  
For dreaming idle dreams !

# BERCEUSE DE GUERRE

*Avoul, 1916*

*(Chanté ) Dodo, l'enfant do,  
L'enfant dormira tantôt*

Le feu s'éteint, le vent gémit,  
La pluie cingle la fenêtre  
Vente t il, pleut il là bas aussi ?  
Grêle t il, tonne t il peut être ?

*Dodo, l'enfant do*

Est il bien ?  
A-t il chaud ?  
Ne manque t il de rien ?  
A t il ce qu'il lui faut ?  
Ses gants, son gilet, ses allumettes,  
Et, dans sa poche, contre son cœur,  
Ma dernière lettre  
Et sa ferveur ?

*L'enfant dormira tantôt*

# A WAR LULLABY

*August, 1916*

*Sleep, sleep, baby, sleep,  
Baby soon will be asleep.*

THE fire dwindles and the wind moans,  
The rain lashes the window-panes . . .  
Is it blowing and raining there ?  
Hailing or thundering perhaps ?

*Sleep, sleep, baby, sleep . . .*

Is he well ?  
Is he warm ?  
Is he lacking naught ?  
Has he all he wants ?  
His coat, his matches, and his gloves,  
And, in his pocket, next his heart,  
My last letter  
And all its love.

*Baby soon will be asleep . . .*

La lampe baisse, le feu s'éteint  
Il va fallor se mettre au lit  
L'enfant ferme ses petits poings  
Mon grand enfant dort il aussi ?  
Dort il paisiblement avant la bataille ?  
Court il, comme un fou  
Sous la mitraille ?  
Ou bien git il dans quelque trou,  
La bouche ouverte et les yeux clos ?

*Dodo l'enfant do*

L'enfant gémit le vent gonfle les rideaux,  
La mèche charbonne  
L'enfant se tourne dans son berceau  
La pluie se tait la nuit frissonne  
Il fait triste à faire peur

*L'enfant dormira tantôt*

De la fureur des Boches delivrez nous  
Seigneur !



The lamp burns low, the fire dwindles.  
We shall have to go to bed.  
The child is clasping its wee fists. . . .  
Is my big child sleeping too ?  
Sleeping peacefully before the battle ?  
Is he running madly  
Through the shells ?  
Or is he lying in some hole,  
With open mouth and with closed eyes ?

*Sleep, sleep, baby, sleep . . .*

The child moans and the wind swells the curtains,  
The wick sputters.  
The child turns in its cot,  
The rain ceases, the night shivers.  
The sadness of it is fearful. . . .

*Baby soon will be asleep. . . .*

From the Germans' fury  
Deliver us, O God !

# L'YSER

*Octobre, 1916*

Pour le deuxième anniversaire de la bataille de l'Yser

Ce qu'il était ? Un clair ruisseau  
Courant en lacets à travers les prairies,  
Entre les grasses fermes et les maigres hameaux  
Dont les toits rouges brillaient au soleil de midi,  
Un ruban d'eau vive enguirlandant la plume  
De la grâce féconde des vaches aux pis lourds  
Et de la chanson servente et saine  
Des coqs sur les fumiers et des cloches sur les  
tours

Ce qu'il est ?  
Un marais  
D'où surgissent quelques ruines,  
Un marais pourri de vermine,  
Accablé de silence,  
Où la Mort pêche à coups de lance

Ce qu'il sera, ce qu'il sera, mes frères ?  
Le Nil de nos splendeurs, le Tibre de notre gloire,  
Le Jourdain de notre espoir,

# THE YSER

*October, 1916*

For the second anniversary of the Battle of the Yser

WHAT was it once ? A bright, clear stream  
Winding its way through spreading fields,  
Between large farms, small villages,  
Whose red roofs gleamed in the midday sun ;  
A ribbon of living water engarlanding the plain,  
With the fertile grace of heavy-uddered cows,  
And the healthful, fervent song  
Of the cocks upon the dung-heaps  
And the bells within the towers.

What is it now ?  
A swamp  
Out of which rise some ruins,  
A vermin-haunted swamp,  
Oppressed with silence,  
Where Death goes fishing with his spear.

What will it be, what will it be, my brothers ?  
The Nile of our splendour, the Tiber of our fame,  
The Jordan of our hope,

L'eau lustrale de notre terre,  
L'ultime sanctuaire  
Où nous viendrons en longs pèlerinages,  
Comme les bêtes à l'abreuvoir,  
Comme les bergers et les mages,  
Aspirer à longs traits la piété des souvenirs  
Et purger nos cœurs de toute aigreur, de tout  
      désir  
Qui pourrait porter ombrage  
A ceux dont les mains blêmes  
Ont purifié nos fronts du sang de leur baptême

The lustral waters of our land,  
The Holy sanctuary  
Where we will come upon long pilgrimage  
Like cattle to the drinking-troughs,  
Like the Shepherds and the Kings,  
To drink long draughts of sacred memory,  
To purge our hearts of every bitterness,  
Every desire, which could cloud the souls  
Of those whose pale cold hands have purified  
    our brows  
With the blood of baptism.

# LA BRABANÇONNE

*Novembre, 1916*

Les déportés entassés dans des wagons à bestiaux, exposés à toutes les intempéries, étaient dans un état pitoyable. Malgré le froid et les privations leur moral restait inébranlable et, loin de se laisser abattre par cette nouvelle forme d'oppression, ils parlaient en chantant des chansons patriotiques :

*" Après des siècles d'esclavage "*

— Ecoute, maman, un train qui passe  
Je n'ai jamais entendu chanter  
Des gens qui avaient l'air moins gai  
Leurs lèvres tremblent, leur voix se casse  
Que va t on faire de ces gens là ?  
Pourquoi s'ils chantent ne rient ils pas ?  
Viens voir, maman, le train qui passe

— Ferme donc la fenêtre, mon petit,  
L'air de Novembre me transit

— On les a parqués comme des bêtes,  
Ils sont serrés comme des harengs  
Drôle d'idée qu'ils ont de chanter à tue tête  
Malgré la pluie, malgré le vent !

# LA BRABANÇONNE

November, 1916

"The men, crowded in open trucks, exposed to wind and weather, were in a most miserable condition. Their *moral*, in spite of cold and privation, was not shaken and, even while suffering this new form of oppression, they went away singing patriotic songs."

*(Extract from the official protest of the Belgian Government)*

"*Après des siècles d'esclavage . . .*"

"Come, mother, hear the long train pass. . . .  
I never heard men sing  
Who seemed less glad,  
Their lips tremble, their voices break.  
What are they doing with those men?  
Why do they sing, yet do not laugh?  
Come, mother, see the long train pass. . . ."

"Close the window, little one,  
The raw November air strikes cold."

"They have shut them in like beasts,  
Packed them tight like herrings.  
How strange that they should sing so loud  
In spite of rain, in spite of wind !

Leurs joues sont pales et leurs yeux brillent  
Malgré le froid, malgré la pluie  
On les a parqués comme des bêtes

— Mon fils, se sont des ouvriers  
Qui vont travailler aux chantiers

— Et ceux là qui lèvent la main  
Comme pour un dernier adieu ?  
Et celui-ci qui ronge un crouton de pain  
Et l'autre qui se cache les yeux ?  
Oh, maman je les reconnais  
Que leur veut on et qu'ont ils fait ?  
N'est-ce pas, dis moi, ce n'est pas eux  
Qui lèvent la main ?

— Mon fils, je ne puis te le cacher  
Ce sont tes frères qu'ils ont emmenés

*' Après des siècles d'esclavage " "*



Their cheeks are pale and their eyes gleam  
In spite of cold, in spite of rain.  
They have shut them in like beasts. . . .”

“ These are working men, my boy,  
Going to work in the building-yards.”

“ And those who raise their hands,  
As if for a last farewell ?  
And he who gnaws a crust of bread,  
And that other who hides his eyes ?  
Oh, mother, surely I know them now. . . .  
What do they want with them, what have they  
done ?

‘ Tell me, tell me, it is not *they*  
Who raise their hands ? ”

“ My son, I cannot hide the truth,  
They have ta'en your brothers away. . . .”

“ *Après des siècles d'esclavage . . .*”

# A EMILE VERHAEREN

*Décembre, 1916*

Nous lui élèverons un tombeau  
Que l'âge ni le temps  
Ne pourra entamer,  
Ou résonnera solennellement  
Le triomphant echo  
De son vers cadencé  
Ce sera dans un champ là bas, sur l'Escaut  
Louetté par le vent,  
Battu par la marée,  
Derrière une digue où silencieusement  
Glisseront les bateaux  
Sur le ciel tourmenté

C'est là que nous le planterons  
À l'heure du grand retour,  
Non pas comme une pierre lourde et stérile,  
Mais comme un arbre puissant et fécond  
Dont l'ombre légère et mobile  
Egrène la lumière du jour  
Non pas comme un marbre calme et froid  
Jeté sur un trou vide,  
Mais comme un arbre d'écorce et de bois

## TO EMILE VERHAEREN

*December, 1916*

WE will raise him a tomb  
Which neither age nor time  
Can ever touch,  
Where solemnly will sound  
The echo triumphing  
Of his rhythmic verse.  
It will be in a field, there, on the Scheldt,  
Lashed by the wind,  
Beaten by the tide,  
Behind a dyke where silently  
The ships will glide  
Against a stormy sky.

'Tis there where we will plant it,  
At the hour of the great return,  
Not like a heavy barren stone,  
But like a mighty fertile tree  
Whose delicate waving shadow  
Sifts the light of day ;  
Not like marble, calm and cold.  
Placed o'er an empty pit,  
But like a tree of bark and wood

Où la vie ardente et la joie avide  
Circulent jusqu'au bout des feuilles  
Comme au bout d'autant de doigts,  
Non pas comme un monument de deuil,  
Mais comme un arbre bruissant de vie  
Chargé de rêves,  
Dont les racines s'abreuvent sans trêve  
Au cœur même du pays

Where ardent life and greedy joy  
Pulse to its every leaf  
As to so many finger-tips ;  
Not like a mourning monument,  
But like a tree rustling with life  
And full of dreams,  
Whose roots drink on unceasingly  
From the country's very heart.

# LE SOLILOQUE DU DÉPORTE

*Décembre, 1916*

Le Gouvernement belge a reçu une série de rapports et de témoignages qui prouvent à l'évidence que les civils belges, dans la zone des armées sont forcés de travailler pour l'ennemi, sous le feu de l'artillerie des Alliés. Un certain nombre d'entr'eux ont été tués et blessés dans ces conditions.

Le dos craque, le ventre gémit  
Je ne bache plus            tant pis !  
Je n'élèverai pas un rempart protecteur  
Contre mes frères  
Je ne soulèverai pas le sol du pays  
Contre ses libérateurs  
Je n'offenserai plus notre commune mère,  
Je ne lutterai plus contre moi même,  
Mes mains ne trahiront plus mon cœur  
Je m'affranchirai de cet anathème  
De fange et de sueur !

Ah ! tu cognes, geôlier, tu cries  
*Schœnhund ! Vormærts !* — tant pis !  
Advienne que pourra,  
Je me croiserai les bras  
Je ne blesserai plus ma patrie

# THE DEPORTEE'S SOLILOQUY

*December, 1916*

The Belgian Government has received several reports and authorized testimonies which prove conclusively that Belgian civilians, in the army zone, are forced to work for the enemy exposed to the fire of the artillery of the Allies. A certain number of them have been killed and wounded under these conditions.

THE back is breaking, the body groans.  
I'll dig no more . . . what matter !  
No more I'll rear protecting walls  
Against my brother.  
No more I'll raise my country's earth  
Against her liberators.  
No more will I offend our common mother,  
No more I'll fight against myself,  
No more my hands betray my heart.  
I'll free my soul from 'neath this curse  
Of mire and sweat ! . . .

Oh ! you strike, gaoler, and you cry :  
" *Schweinhund ! Vorwaerts !* "—what mattter ?  
Come what come may,  
I'll fold my arms ;  
No more I'll wound my country's heart

Du tranchant de ma pelle,  
Je ne percerai plus son sein maternel  
De la pointe de ma pioche,  
Et je baiseraï, à la barbe des Boches,  
Cette terre qu'ils m'ont fait profaner,  
Et je la prierai, à genoux,  
Sous leurs coups,  
De me pardonner ma lâcheté

Des menaces, encore ? Arrête !  
N'entends tu pas les obus chanter ?  
Une main plus puissante que la tienne s'apprete  
A nous frapper  
Gare à la casse ! C'est nous qui paierons,  
Toi et moi, esclave et geôlier,  
Unis enfin dans le même danger  
Mais ce tonnerre de fer et de plomb  
Qui te fait pâhr  
Exalte mon courage,  
Et j'appelle à grands cris l'orage  
Qui finira mon martyre

Au diable le travail, jetez vos outils !  
A genoux,  
A genoux, mes amis,  
Mains jointes, sous nos coups !  
Trop long       trop court       nous y voilà !  
Les tortionnaires sont au supplice  
Vive la Belgique ! Vive le Roi !  
La tranchée est rouge du sang du sacrifice !



With the harsh blows of my spade,  
No more I'll pierce her mother-breast  
With the sharp point of my pick,  
And, before the Boche's eyes, I'll kiss  
That earth they caused me to profane,  
And 'neath their blows, on bended knees,  
I'll beg her  
My cowardice to pardon me. . . .

What ! still more threats ? Stop ! Stop !  
Do you not hear the shrill shells singing ?  
A stronger hand than yours draws near  
To strike us.

Look to yourself ! 'Tis *we* shall pay,  
You and I, gaoler and slave,  
United at last in a common doom.  
But this thunder of iron and lead  
Which makes you pale  
Raises my courage high,  
And I call aloud to the storm  
Which shall end my martyrdom. . . .

To the devil with work ! Throw down your tools !  
To your knees, my friends,  
To your knees,  
Fold your hands, beneath *our* blows !  
Too far . . . too short . . . 'tis coming here !  
The torturer is tortured now.  
Long live Belgium ! Long live the King !  
The trench runs red with sacrifice's blood. . . .

# LA PAIX

*Décembre, 1916*

La lune se lève sur le village,  
Les haies tressaillent dans la nuit,  
Tout repose, tout est sage,  
Et c'est Dimanche et c'est minuit

La Paix ? Nous l'avons, la paix véritable,  
La paix de l'âme candide et pure,  
La paix seraine, franche, aimable,  
La seule que nous puissions conclure  
Sans parjure

Ils l'ont nos soldats chantant sous les obus,  
Ils l'ont nos marins dansant sur la mer,  
Ils l'ont, en plein ciel, nos chevaucheurs de  
l'air,  
Ils l'ont, sans le savoir, dans leur cœur ingénu  
Ils l'ont surtout, splendide et solennelle,  
Ceux qui sont morts pour le bon combat,  
Et dont la Terre, de ses grands bras,  
Berce le rêve fraternel

On nous offre la paix, la paix libératrice ?  
Mais nous l'avons déjà !

# PEACE

*December, 1916*

THE moon is rising o'er the village,  
The hedgerows quiver in the night,  
Everything is good and restful,  
It is Sunday, it is midnight. . . .

Peace ? We have it, the true peace,  
Peace of soul, childlike and pure,  
Peace, frank, serene and happy,  
The only peace we may conclude  
With honesty.

Our soldiers have it, singing 'neath the shells,  
Our sailors have it, dancing on the sea,  
Our airmen have it, as they ride the clouds,  
They have it, all unknowing in their hearts.  
And above all they have it, sound and deep,  
Those who have died for the good fight  
And whom the Earth in her great arms  
Rocks in a blessed sleep.

They offer us peace, the liberator ?  
But we possess her now !

Elle inspire nos efforts, elle guide nos pas,  
Elle couronne nos sacrifices  
La Paix ? Elle est partout chez nous,  
Dans nos foyers et sur le front,  
Dans nos prières, notre ferveur,  
Dans le calme des champs, le fracas des canons,  
Dans notre zèle, dans notre honneur

La Paix ? Mais c'est vous, misérables,  
Qui l'avez perdue,  
La paix de l'âme, candide, aimable,—  
Et vous nous offrez ce que vous n'avez plus !

La lune inonde le village,  
Les haies se taisent, un chien aboie,  
Tout repose tout est sage,  
La neige brille sur les toits

She prompts our efforts, guards our steps,  
And crowns our sacrifice.

Peace ? She is everywhere with us,  
In our homes, at the front,  
In our prayers, in our faith,  
In the calm of the field, the turmoil of war,  
In our zeal, in our honour.

Peace ? But 'tis you, poor wretches,  
Who have lost your peace,  
Peace of soul, childlike and happy,—  
And you offer us what is not yours to give.

The moon o'erflows the village,  
The hedges are still, a dog barks in the night,  
Everything is good and restful,  
Upon the roofs the snow gleams white.

# LE NOËL DU SOLDAT

Noël, 1916

Petit enfant qui reposes là  
Dans de pauvre langes,  
C'est pour Toi que je combats  
Dans le sang et dans la fange

Petit enfant qui gemis  
Dans une humble cahute,  
C'est pour Toi que je lutte  
Sans trêve et sans répit

Petit enfant qui frissonnes  
Sur une botte de paille,  
C'est pour Toi que résonne  
Le signal de la bataille

Petit enfant qui sanglottes  
De froid dans la nuit,  
C'est pour Toi que je grelotte  
Sans lâcher mon fusil

Petit enfant qui someilles,  
Ta faim apaisée,  
C'est pour Toi que je veille  
Au fond de ma tranchée

# THE SOLDIER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL

*Christmas, 1916*

LITTLE Child lying there  
In poor swaddling-clothes,  
'Tis for Thee that I fight  
In the blood and in the mire.

Little Child, wailing there,  
In a humble shed,  
'Tis for Thee that I struggle  
Without pause or rest.

Little Child shivering there  
On a heap of straw,  
'Tis for Thee that resounds  
The signal for the fight.

Little Child sobbing there  
With cold in the night,  
'Tis for Thee that I freeze  
Holding fast my gun.

Little Child sleeping there,  
With Thy hunger stilled,  
'Tis for Thee I vigil keep  
Down within my trench.

Petit enfant qui bénis  
Les Rois et les Bergers,  
C'est vers Toi que je crie  
Au plus fort de la mêlée

Petit enfant qui ris,  
C'est pour Toi que je vis ,  
Petit enfant qui pleures  
C'est pour Toi que je meurs

Petit enfant, petit enfant,  
Mon Christ !  
Souffrant, joyeux, souriant  
Ou triste,  
Image de mon enfant qui reposes là,  
C'est pour Toi que je combats !



Little Child who blessed  
The Shepherds and the Kings,  
'Tis to Thee that I cry  
In the middle of the fight.

Little Child who smiles,  
'Tis for Thee that I live ;  
Little Child who weeps,  
'Tis for Thee that I die.

Little Child, little Child,  
My Christ !  
Suffering, smiling, glad or sad,  
Image of my child lying there,  
'Tis for Thee that I fight ! . . .

# LA VOIX DE BRUXELLES

Janvier, 1917

« A Namur on nous craint,  
A Liège, on nous hait,  
A Bruxelles, on se fêche de nous »  
(Aïeux d'un officier allemand)

PASSEZ, passez, grands conquérants,  
—Plus il y en a, mieux ça vaudra—  
Soufflez dans vos fifres stridents,  
L'heure viendra qui tout paiera

La détresse frappe à notre porte,  
Mais nous ne lui ouvrirons pas,  
Votre poigne n'est pas plus forte  
Que les verrous de notre foi !

Allez a Bapaume, à Péronne,  
—*Parade Marsch*, marquez le pas—  
Bon voyage, le clairon sonne,  
Nous ne vous reverrons pas !

Si vous nous volez notre pain  
—Plus ça va mal, moins ça durera—  
C'est que vous avez grand faim,  
Car l'heure est proche qui tout paiera

# THE VOICE OF BRUSSELS

*January, 1917*

In Namur, they fear us,  
In Liège, they hate us,  
In Brussels, they laugh at us.  
(*Confession of a German officer*)

PASS on, pass on, great conquerors,  
—The more there are, the better—  
Blow into your strident fifes  
The hour comes which pays for all.

Misery is knocking at our door,  
But we will not open it,  
Your fist shall not be stronger  
Than the strong bolts of our faith !

Go to Bapaume and to Péronne  
—*Parade-Marsch !* Step out !—  
Farewell, the trumpet sounds,  
We shall see you no more.

If you steal our bread away  
—The worse it is, the less 'twill last—  
'Tis because you hunger too,  
The hour is near which pays for all.

Roulez, roulez dans vos longs trains,  
Nous ne vous arrêterons pas,  
Plus ça va mal, plus ça va bien,  
Plus il y en a mieux ça vaudra

Condamnez, pillez, fusillez,  
Nous ne nous lamenterons pas,  
Quand vous nous aurez tous déportés,  
La Belgique vous déportera

Passez donc, vainqueurs de Dinant,  
*F'ortwaerts !* N'entendez vous pas  
La Mort avide qui claque des dents  
Et le canon qui gronde là bas ?

#### ENVOI

O Dieu de lumière, de bonté, de justice,  
Si nous devons mourir, souviens toi  
Accorde nous le prix de notre sacrifice,  
L'heure bénie qui tout paiera

Roll on, roll on in your long trains,  
Be sure we shall not stop you here,  
The worse it is, the better it is,  
The more there are the merrier.

Condemn, plunder, shoot,  
We will not lament,  
When you have deported all  
Belgium then will deport you.

Pass on, brave victors of Dinant,  
*Forwaerts!* Do you not hear,  
Hungry Death who grinds his teeth  
And the cannons rumbling there?

#### ENVOI

O God of light, of goodness, and of justice,  
If we must die, remember:  
Grant the price of sacrifice,  
That blessed hour which pays for all.

## LE CIEL EST CLAIR

*Fevrier, 1917*

IL gèle, le ciel est clair,  
La lune découpe sur la neige  
De longues ombres bleues  
Les temps sont durs c'est la guerre  
Dieu nous protège

La terre est froide comme un diamant,  
Les arbres sont raides comme des pierres,  
Fais ce que dois, et à l'instant  
Les étoiles brillent, le ciel est clair

Pas un souffle, pas un cri,  
Les hiboux eux-mêmes doivent se taire  
Rien ne rompt l'implacable silence de la nuit,  
Mais, qu'importe ? Le ciel est clair

La neige craque sous mes pas  
Nous n'avons jamais mieux compris  
Le prix ineffable de la vie,  
Où nous allons, et pourquoi

## THE SKY IS CLEAR

*February, 1917*

It is freezing, the sky is clear,  
Upon the snow the moon  
Traces long shadows blue.  
The times are hard : it is war.  
God be with us.

The earth is cold as a diamond,  
The trees are stiff as stones,  
Do what you must, upon the spot.  
The stars are gleaming, the sky is clear.

Not a breath, not a cry,  
E'en the owls are still.  
Nothing disturbs the silence of night,  
But what matter ? The sky is clear.

The snow crackles 'neath my feet :  
Never have we better known  
How dear life is to us,  
And where we go and why.

La neige craque sous mes pas  
Nous n'avons jamais mieux senti  
L'orgueil du devoir accompli  
Et l'ivresse du don de soi

Et je donnerais tous les printemps  
Parfumés d'églantines,  
Tous les étés, tous les automnes enivrants,  
Pour la limpidité cristalline  
De cet hiver !

C'est la guerre, les temps sont durs  
Le froid mord, la terre est pure  
Dieu nous protège le ciel est clair



The snow crackles 'neath my feet :  
Never have we better felt  
The pride of duty done,  
The joy of giving all.

And I'd give every springtime  
Perfumed with eglantine,  
Radiant summer, golden autumn,  
For the limpid purity  
Of this winter night ! . . .

It is war and times are hard,  
The cold is biting, the earth is pure.  
God is with us, the sky is clear.

# LE CREDO DU SOLDAT

*Février, 1917*

Je crois en mon pays,  
Je crois en mon clocher,  
Je crois en ce brin d'herbe qui pousse sur mon  
abri,  
Je crois en la jeunesse, je crois en la beauté

Le vent qui passe, j'y crois,  
Et le nuage au ciel,  
Et l'oiseau dans les bois,  
Et la gloire éternelle

Je crois ce que je vois  
Et que la vie est belle,  
Je crois ce que je sens  
Et je mourrai content

Je crois ce que je vois,  
Que mon chemin est droit,  
Et que ma cause est bonne  
Et que j'ai pris la Croix.

# THE SOLDIER'S CREED

*February, 1917*

I BELIEVE in my country,  
I believe in my clock-tower,  
I believe in this blade of grass growing on my  
dug-out,  
I believe in youth, I believe in beauty.

The passing wind, I believe in it,  
And in the clouds in the sky,  
In the birds of the woods,  
And in eternal glory.

I believe in what I see  
And that this life is good,  
I believe in what I feel  
And I shall die content.

I believe in what I see  
And that my path is straight,  
And that my cause is good  
And that I took the Cross.

Je crois en ma vie  
Et je crois en ma mort,  
Et que, quand tout est dit,  
Dieu reste le plus fort

Je crois ce que je vois  
Et ce que je ne vois pas  
Je crois en la vertu suprême du sacrifice,  
Je crois en ce brin d'herbe qui pousse sur mon  
    abri,  
Je crois en la fierté,  
Je crois en la justice,  
Je crois en mon clocher,  
Je crois en mon pays

I believe in my life,  
I believe in my death,  
And that, when all is said,  
God is the strongest.

I believe what I see  
And what I cannot see—  
The supreme value of sacrifice,  
I believe in this blade of grass growing on my  
    dug-out,  
I believe in noble pride,  
I believe in justice,  
I believe in my clock-tower,  
I believe in my country.

# LA PRISE DE BAGDAD

*Mars, 1917*

Amis, asseyons nous sur les bords de l'Euphrate  
Et décrochons nos harpes des vieux saules  
bibliques,

Leurs cordes impatientes répètent dans la brise  
L'écho triomphateur des stances prophétiques

" Bagdad est prise !      Bagdad est prise !      "

Elle est tombée la Babylone allemande,  
La succursale dorée des Kaiser de Berlin,  
La croix de nos drapeaux se déploie dans la  
brise,

Nos glaives ont écorné le dur croissant payen

" Bagdad est prise !      Bagdad est prise !      "

O vous qui languissez à mille lieues d'ici,  
Prisonniers, déportés des geôles allemandes,  
Devinez vous nos cœurs, entendez-vous nos cris  
Portés sur l'aile victorieuse de la brise  
Jusqu'aux derniers villages de vos plaines  
flamandes ?

" Bagdad est prise !      Bagdad est prise !      "

# BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

*March, 1917*

ON the Euphrates banks let us sit, my friends,  
And take our harps from off the Biblic trees,  
Their eager strings sing in the breeze again  
The echo of triumphant prophecy :

" Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . "

The German Babylon has fallen,  
The Eastern offspring of Berlin,  
The cross on our flag is fluttering again,  
Our swords the pagan crescent have shorn :  
" Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . "

O you who languish a thousand miles away,  
Prisoners and slaves in German gaols,  
Can you not feel our hearts, can you not hear  
our cries

Borne on Victory's wings again  
To the last village in the Flemish land ?  
" Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . "

Nous chantons aujourd'hui ou Israël pleura,  
Nous chanterons demain où vous vous désolez,  
Si la lune a deux dents pour déchirer sa proie  
La croix a deux bras pour frapper vos geôliers  
Sur la Sprée, sur l'Euphrate, souffle la même  
brise,  
Ecoutez donc " Bagdad est prise ! " "



We sing to-day where Israel once wept,  
We'll sing to-morrow where you weep to-day,  
If the moon has two horns her prey to rend  
The Cross has two arms your gaolers to smite.  
Over Berlin and Babylon the same breeze blows  
again,  
Hearken then : " Bagdad is ta'en ! . . . "

# LES RENONCULES

Mai, 1917

Il a plu du soleil sur les prés,  
Des gouttes d'or scintillent au bout de chaque  
brin d'herbe,  
Il a neige de la lumière et de l'été  
Sur les boucliers bruns de notre hiver acerbe

Jamais la nature n'a paru si charmante  
Que depuis que nos regards ont dû s'en détourner,  
Jamais l'ombre n'a coulé si fraîche sur les sentes,  
Jamais il n'a plu tant de soleil sur les prés

Jamais nos yeux, ouverts par l'épreuve,  
N'ont mieux compris tout ce qu'ils ont perdu  
Les sources vives où l'on abreuve  
A longs traits sa soif de bonheur ingénu

Il a plu du soleil sur les prés,  
Il en a plu ici, il en a plu là bas  
Ce sont les mêmes fleurs au delà du détroit,  
Les mêmes chants d'oiseau, les mêmes parfums  
d'été,

# BUTTERCUPS

*May, 1917*

It has rained sun upon the fields,  
Golden drops glitter on every blade of grass,  
It has snowed flakes of summer and light  
Upon our bitter winter's barren shields.

Never has nature seemed so fair  
As since our eyes must turn away from her,  
Never did shadows fall so cool upon the paths,  
Ne'er has it rained so much sun on the fields.

Never have our eyes, opened by trial,  
Understood so well all they have lost :  
The living fountains where we once might drink  
Long draughts to quench our thirst for simple  
joy.

It has rained sun upon the fields,  
It has rained here, it has rained over there.  
Beyond the Channel, the same flowers are found,  
The same birds' songs, the same summer  
scents.

On dirait que la Terre sent qu'on se bat pour elle,  
Qu'elle devine nos faiblesses et qu'elle se met en  
frais,

Et qu'elle tâche de se faire encore plus belle  
Pour flatter notre zèle et meurtrir nos regrets

On dirait qu'elle nous dit de faire comme ces  
fleurs

Qui se tournent sans cesse du côté du soleil,  
Et dont le seul bonheur,  
Avant d'être fauchées est d'avoir vu le ciel

The Earth seems to know we are fighting for her,  
She feels our weakness and so takes pains  
To make herself still more fair  
To stir our zeal and sharpen our regrets.

She seems to tell us to do as these flowers  
Which ceaselessly turn towards the sun,  
And whose only joy  
Before they are mown down, is to have seen  
the sky.

# LE CHANT DES MERLES

*Mai, 1917*

SIFFLEZ, les merles, chantez bien haut  
Vos nids, vos œufs et vos amours,  
Le fermier aiguisé sa faux,  
C'est la fin d'un beau jour

Sifflez en chœur, à pleine voix,  
Dans les haies sombres, sous le ciel pâle,  
Chantez le printemps et la joie  
De voir pointer les premières étoules

Chantez, chantez à cœur perdu  
La rosée des prairies, le parfum des lilas,  
Et l'ombre discrète des soirs émus  
Où nos âmes se parlent tout bas

Dites, O dites nous que la vie est belle  
Et que la mort est plus belle encore,  
Et que la main qui nous frappe n'est pas cruelle,  
Et que nous devons bénir notre sort

# THE BLACKBIRDS' SONG

*May, 1917*

WHISTLE, blackbirds, sing aloud  
Of your nests, your eggs and your love,  
The farmer is sharpening his scythe,  
'Tis the end of a lovely day.

Whistle in chorus with full throats,  
In the darkening hedges, beneath a pale sky,  
Sing of the springtime and the joy  
Of watching the first stars peeping out.

Sing, sing loud with crazy heart  
Of the dew on the fields and the lilac-scent,  
And the quiet shadows of trembling night  
When our souls whisper together.

Say, O say that life is fair  
And that death is fairer still,  
That the hand which strikes us is not cruel.  
And that we must bless our lot.

Sifflez plus haut, les merles, sifflez en chœur  
A la pointe des branches, sur le faite des toits,  
Chantez pour que nous n'entendions pas  
Gronder et gémir nos cœurs.

Criez l'espoir de vos nichées  
Et la folie de vos amours  
Pour que nous puissions, un instant, oublier  
L'orage avide et les cieux sourds

Chantez pour que nous baissions la tête,  
Chantez pour que nous joignons les mains,  
Chantez pour que nous ne puions pas en vain  
" Que Votre volonté soit faite "

Chantez pour que nous reprenions  
Notre route interrompue,  
Pour que la sueur perle sur notre front  
Et que nos peines ne soient point perdues

Sifflez pour que nous marchions courbés en deux  
Sous notre cher fardeau,  
Et que nous sentions peser, comme la main de  
Dieu,  
Notre sac sur notre dos



Whistle louder, blackbirds, louder still  
On the tree-tops and gable-points.  
Sing aloud that we may not hear  
Our hearts' wailing and groans.

Cry out the hope of your nesting  
And the madness of your love  
That we may, for a time, forget  
The hungry storm and leaden sky.

Sing that we may bow our heads,  
Sing that we may fold our hands,  
Sing that we pray not all in vain :  
"Thy will be done."

Sing that we follow once again  
Our life's broken path,  
That the sweat pearl upon our brows  
And that our labour be not lost.

Whistle that we may march bent down  
Neath our beloved load,  
And that we feel the weight as of God's hand  
Of our burden on our backs.

# MESSINES

*Juin, 1917*

Le tonnerre des canons a grondé sur Messines,  
La plaine a tremblé, le ciel s'est obscurci,  
Vingt volcans ont jailli des flancs de la colline,  
Et le sol s'est ouvert sous les pieds de l'ennemi

L'Angleterre a reconnu sa grande voix tragique,  
La France attentive a deviné le signal,  
Et il n'est pas un coin des Provinces Belges  
Où le vent n'ait porté son écho triomphal

Et la terre martyre, la terre de Messines,  
S'est soudain réveillée pour répondre à l'appel,  
Elle a péniblement soulevé sa poitrine,  
Et tourné ses grands yeux vers le ciel

" Venez," a-t-elle crié, " venez, vaillants Anglais,  
Creusez de vos obus mes prairies désolées,  
Voilà près de trois ans que je vous attendais

" Venez, Australiens, venez, nobles Persées,  
Venez meurtrir mes bras, venez briser mes  
chaînes,  
Et cueillir le baiser d'Andromède délivrée

# MESSINES

*June, 1917*

THE thunder of the cannons has rumbled o'er  
Messines,  
The plain has trembled, the sky grown dark,  
Twenty volcanoes sprang out from the hill,  
And the earth opened beneath the foe.

England has recognized her own great tragic voice,  
Expectant France has heard the signal loud,  
And there is no corner of Belgian soil  
Where the wind bore not its echo triumphing.

And the martyred earth, the earth of Messines,  
Suddenly awoke to answer the call ;  
Painfully she raised her mighty breast  
And turned her patient eyes towards the sky.

" Come," she cried, " come brave Englishman,  
Plough my sad fields with your shells,  
Three years I have awaited you.

" Come, Australians, noble Perseus, come.  
Come crush my arms but break my chains,  
Receive delivered Andromeda's grateful kiss.

“ Voilà près de trois ans que je couve ma haine,  
Trois ans que mon corps saigne sous les griffes  
de l'ennemi,  
Trois ans qu'il m'a livrée aux bêtes dans l'arène !

“ Trois ans qu'il m'abreuve d'injures et de  
mépris,  
Trois ans qu'il me crache ses mensonges au  
visage,  
Trois ans que je n'ai ni douté, ni gémi.

“ Frappez moi donc, soldats, c'est le jour du  
carnage,  
Vos coups me sont plus doux que toutes les  
caresses,  
Et il n'est pas d'amour plus pur que votre  
rage ! ”

Et la terre martyre, la terre de Messines,  
Eclata d'un rire de sauvage allégresse,  
Et, secouant ses membres étincelants de ruines,  
Guida vers la Victoire l'Angleterre vengeresse !

“For nigh three years have I nursed my hate,  
Three years have I bled in the enemy’s grip,  
Three years since I was thrown to the wild  
beasts.

“Three years have they fed me on insults and  
scorn,  
Three years they spit their lies into my face,  
Three years I neither doubted, quailed nor  
groaned. . . .

“Strike, therefore, soldiers, ’tis the day of  
slaughter,  
Your blows are sweeter to me than a caress.  
And there is no love purer than your wrath !”

And the martyred earth, the earth of Messines,  
Burst out in laughter of savage glee,  
And shaking her arms gleaming with ruins,  
Guided towards victory England’s revenge !

# MÉDITATION SUR LA NUIT DU TROIS AOUT

1914-1917

- Que faites vous assis, la tête dans votre manteau ?
- Que faites vous accroupis, le menton dans la main ?
- Que faites-vous couchés, les yeux levés vers le ciel ?
- Nous attendons que le soleil se lève sur les eaux
- Et qu'à la veille succède le lendemain
- Nous attendons que les morts se réveillent.

Les soldats montent la garde autour du tombeau,  
Ils ont roulé la pierre, ils ont posé les sceaux  
Dans la nuit étoilée brillent leurs baionettes  
Et ils portent des casques à pointe sur la tête  
Ils parlent une langue que nous n'entendons  
pas,

Une langue précise et lourde comme leurs pas  
Même au seuil du tombeau, ils ne baissent pas la  
voix

Et ils trébuchent en jurant sur les croix

# MEDITATION ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST THE THIRD

1914-1917

- WHAT are you doing seated there, with your head wrapped in your cloak ?
- What are you doing crouched there, with your chin upon your hand ?
- What are you doing lying there, with your eyes fixed on the sky ?
- We are waiting for the sun to rise upon the waters.
- And for the morn to follow on the night.
- We are waiting for the dead to awake. . . .

The soldiers are watching around the tomb,  
They have rolled the stone, they have set the seals.

In the starry night their bayonets gleam,  
They are wearing pointed helmets on their heads.  
They speak a speech we do not understand,  
A language harsh and heavy as their steps.  
By the very grave, they lower not their voices,  
And they stumble on the crosses and they curse. . . .

Que manque t il, mon pays à ta Passion ?  
N as tu pas eu ton agonie dans le Jardin ?  
N as tu pas du subir les caresses de Judas  
En cette nuit d août où la trahison  
Te baisait la joue en te tordant la main ?  
N as tu pas du, comme Jesus faire ton choix ?

Que manque t il mon pays à ton Calvaire ?  
N es tu pas tombé trois fois sous la croix—  
A Liège a Namur à Anvers ?  
T ont ils épargné leurs injures leurs crachats  
Leurs railleries et leurs coups ?  
N as tu pas saigné sous la couronne d épines ?  
N as tu pas senti s enfoncer les clous—  
Dinant Termonde Andenne Tamines ?  
N as tu pas demandé à boire  
Et goûté le fiel de l éponge dérisoire  
Tandis que tes bourreaux a tes pieds  
Se di putaient ta robe a coups de des ?  
N as tu pas eu faim et soif de Justice ?  
N as tu pas mange le pain de la captivité  
N as tu pas bu jusqu à la lie le calice  
De l esclavage et de l iniquité ?

Pourtant la terre n a pas célébré ton deuil  
Les cieux ne se sont pas obscurcis  
Tu n as pas eu de mains amies  
Pour te coucher dans ton cercueil



What is lacking, O my Country, to thy Passion ?  
Hast thou not had thine agony in the Garden ?  
Didst thou not suffer the caress of Judas  
In that August night when treason  
Kissed thy cheek and wrung thy hand ?  
Didst thou not, like Jesus, make thy choice ?

What is lacking, O my Country, to thy Calvary ?  
Didst thou not fall three times beneath the  
cross—

At Liège, at Namur, and at Antwerp ?  
Wert thou spared their spitting and their insults,  
Their mockeries and their blows ?  
Didst thou not bleed beneath a crown of thorns ?  
Didst thou not feel the nails pierce thy flesh—  
Dinant, Termonde, Andenne, Tamines ?  
Didst thou not ask to drink, and taste  
The gall on mocking sponge,  
While beneath thee, at thy feet,  
The soldiers cast upon thy vesture lots ?  
Didst thou not for Justice thirst and hunger ?  
Didst thou not eat the captive's bitter bread ?  
Didst thou not drink unto the very dregs  
The cruel cup of shame and slavery ?

And yet the earth did not join in thy mourning.  
The heavens were not overcast and black,  
No loving hands were near to lay thee  
Tenderly in thy tomb.

Voilà non trois jours mais trois ans que tu tombas,  
Comme un fruit trop mûr, dans ton tombeau,  
Trois ans qu'ils ont roulé la pierre et posé les  
sceaux

Et les morts ne se réveillent toujours pas

—Que faites vous assis, la tête dans votre man  
teau ?

—Que faites vous couchés, les yeux levés vers le  
ciel ?

—Que faites vous accroupis, le menton dans la  
main ?

—Nous entendons les moissonneurs qui aiguisent  
leurs faux

—Nous humons les parfums des prairies mater  
nelles

—Nous regardons palir l'étoile du matin

And now, not three days but three years have  
passed

Since thou fell'st, like o'erripe fruit, into thy  
grave,

Since they rolled the stone and set the seals,  
And still the dead have not arisen again. . . .

—What are you doing seated there, with your  
head wrapped in your cloak?

—What are you doing lying there, with eyes  
fixed on the sky?

—What are you doing crouched there, with your  
chin upon your hand?

—We are listening to the reapers sharpening  
their scythes.

—We are breathing in the perfume of our  
country's fields.

—We are watching the paling of the morning  
star.

# QUATRE POÈMES POUR LES ENTANTS

## PAQUES

PETITS OISEAUX qui chantez là

—Le pinson demande      Qu est ce que c est ? —

Avez vous vu le Roi des Rous ?

—La fauvette crie      Mon nid est pret ! —

Voilà tro s jours qu il est parti

—Le merle répond      C est moi ! —

Et je ne sa s où ils L ont mis

—Et la mésange      Tra la la !

Je vous en prie petits oiseaux

—Le merle répond      C est moi ! —

Ouvrez vos ailes volez là haut

—Et la mésange      Tra la la ! —

Et dites moi si vous voyez

—Le pinson demande      Qu est-ce que c est ? —

Mon Jésus qui s en est allé

—La fauvette crie      Mon nid est pret !

Petits oiseaux, je vous en prie

—Le pinson demande      Qui vient là ? —

Ouvrez vos ailes et d tes moi

—Le merle répond      C est lui ! —

Quel est cet homme au bout de l allée

—La fauvette crie      Le jardinier ! —

Q i s avance lentement vers moi ?

—Et la mésange      Tra la la !

# FOUR POEMS FOR CHILDREN

## EASTER

LITTLE birds who sing aloud

—"What is the matter?" said the finch—

Have you seen the King of Kings?

—The black-cap replied: "My nest is made!"—

Three days ago He went away,

—The blackbird cried: "'Tis I!"—

And I know not where they have Him laid.

—And the tomtit: "Tra la la!"

I do entreat you, little birds,

—The blackbird replied: "'Tis I!"—

Spread out your wings, fly up above,

—And the tomtit: "Tra la la!"—

And tell me if you cannot see

—"What is the matter?" said the finch—

My Jesus who has gone away.

—The black-cap cried: "My nest is made!"

Little birds, I beg of you,

—The finch said: "Who is coming here?"—

Spread out your wings and answer me,

—The blackbird replied: "'Tis he!"—

Who is that man, at the pathway's end,

—The black-cap answered: "The gardener!"—

Coming towards me with slow step?

—And the tomtit: "Tra la la!"

## NOEL

J'ai couru les bois, j'ai couru les champs,  
Je n'ai pas trouvé la Mère et l'Enfant  
J'ai marché longtemps  
Par tous les déserts  
J'ai vogué longtemps  
Sur toutes les mers  
Je n'ai pas trouvé la Mère et l'Enfant

J'ai cherché sous tous les chaumes,  
J'ai prié sur toutes les tours,  
J'ai visité tous les royaumes,  
J'ai servi à toutes les cours,  
J'ai parcouru l'Afrique et l'Orient,  
J'ai brûlé l'hiver et gelé l'été  
Et je n'ai pas trouvé,  
La Mère et l'Enfant

Quand je suis revenu, brisé de fatigue,  
Vers ma maison blanche plantée sur la digue,  
Avec ses tuiles rouges et ses volets verts  
Et ses pigeons bleus perchés sur la gouttière,  
Mon cœur a frémi, mes yeux ont brûlé  
Car j'ai vu la Mère  
Sous le colombier,

## CHRISTMAS

I RAN through woods, I ran through fields,  
I did not find the Mother and Child.  
I walked for long  
'Cross deserts wild,  
I tossed for long  
On every sea . . .  
I did not find the Mother and Child.

I sought 'neath every cottage roof,  
I prayed on every mighty tower,  
I visited every kingdom,  
I served at every court,  
I crossed the East and Africa,  
I burned in winter and in summer froze . . .  
And I did not find  
The Mother and Child.

When I came home again, broken with fatigue,  
Towards my white cottage planted by the shore,  
With its red tiles and shutters green  
And its blue pigeons perched upon the roof,  
My heart began to quiver, my eyes to burn . . .  
For I saw the Mother,  
Beneath the dovecot.

Chantant ses prières  
A son nouveau-né,  
Car j'ai vu la Mère,  
L'Enfant dans ses bras,  
Car j'ai vu la Mère  
Qui m'attendait là



Singing her prayers  
To her newborn Son,  
For I saw the Mother,  
The Child in her arms,  
For I saw the Mother  
Awaiting me there.

## JÉSUS MARCHE

Jésus marche par les champs,  
— Mouches, bourdonnez ses louanges !—  
La main dans la main de Jean  
—“ N'est il pas vrai, mon bon ange ? ”

Jésus marche par les pierres,  
—Sifflez sa gloire, serpents !—  
La main sur l'épaule de Pierre  
— ‘ Oui, c'est ainsi, mon enfant ’ ”

Jésus marche par les bois,  
—Ruisseaux, bruisez ses louanges !—  
Suivi dans l'ombre par Judas  
—“ N'est-il pas vrai, mon bon ange ? ”

Jésus s'assied au pied d'un chêne  
—Chantez sa gloire pinsons !—  
Sur le manteau de Madeleine,  
Et ses disciples s'asseyent en rond

“ Venez a moi, le cœur content,  
Venez a moi, le cœur en peine,  
Venez mouches, ruisseaux, pinsons, serpents  
—“ Oui c'est ainsi, mon enfant ”

## JESUS WALKS

JESUS walks through the fields,  
—Flies, buzz aloud His praise !—  
Hand in hand with John,  
—“ Guardian Angel, is't not true ? ”

Jesus walks upon the stones,  
—Hiss out His glory, snakes !—  
On Peter's shoulder rests his hand.  
—“ Yes, it is true, my child.”

Jesus walks in the woods.  
—Streamlets, ripple out His praise !—  
Followed by Judas in the shade. . . .  
—“ Guardian Angel, is't not true ? ”

Jesus sits beneath an oak,  
—Finches, His glory sing aloud !—  
Upon the cloak of Magdalen,  
And His disciples sit in a round :

“ Come unto me with heart content,  
Come unto me with heart in pain,  
Come, flies, streamlets, finches, snakes . . . ”  
—“ Yes, it is true, my child.”

## PRIERE DU SOIR

BÉBÉ Jésus, notre Père,  
—Ne suis-je pas Ta fille ?—  
Protège ma petite mère  
Et ma sœur aussi

Donne lui des yeux heureux  
—Mon frère, n'est il pas Ton fils ?—  
Doux Jésus, qui es aux cieux,  
Et à ma sœur aussi

Jésus, mon Dieu, sois béni,  
—Papa, n'est il pas Ton fils ?—  
Protège mon roi et ma patrie,  
—Maman, n'est-elle pas Ta fille ?

## EVENING PRAYER

BABY Jesus, Our Father,  
—Am I not Your child ?—  
Guard and shield my little mother  
And my sister too.

Give to her bright happy eyes  
—My brother, is he not Your son ?—  
Jesus dear, up in the sky,  
And to my sister too.

Jesus, my God, be you blessed,  
—Father, is he not Your son ?—  
Protect my country and my king,  
—Mother, is she not Your child ?

## A CHRISTMAS STORY

I WAS about the only one left in the village with the sacristan, said an old woman somewhere in France, but we had arranged between us to hold a Christmas service on Christmas night, just as if nothing had happened. The priest being away looking after the wounded could not celebrate Mass as usual, but we managed to find the painted statues of the Virgin and the Child, and St. Joseph, and arranged them in the only chapel left whole, on the right hand side of the choir.

It was a stormy, cold night and I could see, through the torn roof, the clouds passing swiftly before the moon. There was such a draught that the sacristan had twice to relight the candles, which I had brought along with me. The Boches had been there, so the great silver candlesticks had disappeared. Besides, my candles would have been too small for them. So the sacristan stuck them in two empty bottles—you always find plenty of empty bottles where the Boches have passed. The poor fellow was coughing very badly. He had hunted everywhere for the three life-sized shepherds,

with their long crooks and their brown capes, whom we had seen for so long kneeling before the Holy Family, but they had gone, and I believe that he thought they had really gone away as he could find no trace of them. "They have gone to the war with the others. There are no shepherds left to keep the flock!"

"There was no flock to keep," said I, and, at the time, I thought it was one of his jokes—for, like most sacristans, he enjoyed his little joke—but, as you will see, it was not.

He was also depressed because St Joseph had lost a leg in the battle and could only stand propped up against a chair. The Holy Virgin did not fare better, and the arm with which she used to clasp her Child so tenderly was broken at the elbow. The Child Jesus was miraculously preserved, even the two fingers raised to bless the worshippers had remained quite whole. Only the glass eyes must have been shaken out of the sockets, for these were empty now, and I shivered when I saw the two small black holes in the smiling tender face. But the sacristan was more concerned with the Mother's arm and St Joseph's leg. You could always replace eyes, he said, but a leg and an arm have to be carved and painted and it would cost a lot of money. And where was the money to come from?

Still, we had set our hearts on this midnight

I was still wondering how they could have come into our church (for the village stands close to the firing line and the nearest field-hospital is two miles distant) when, to my amazement, I saw them pass us, without a sign of recognition, and kneel before the Virgin exactly in the attitude of the lost statues of the Shepherds. The man who had lost his leg knelt before St. Joseph, his left hand resting on the ground, the one armed one bowed his head in a deep salutation, turned towards the Virgin, and the blind one kissed the Child's feet, staring at him as if he could meet his eyes. They had taken their caps off and I felt sure that I had seen their faces before. The sacristan was trembling from head to foot, his mouth was working, and I thought he was going to address them, when I heard the deep voice of the first wounded soldier speaking to St. Joseph.

"I have given you my leg, Joseph, so that you could lead the Mother and the Child wherever your Angel tells you to go, to Egypt, to France, to England, or anywhere you please. I have given you my good strong leg, the leg of a young man, so that you could run errands for the Mother, fetch wood and water for her and provide for all her needs. I used to be proud of it, good Joseph, when I danced with my bride at the fair, or when I ran through the mountain jumping over brooks and crags. I



shall be prouder when it is yours and when I think that, serving you, it serves also the Virgin and the Child."

Then the second one spoke to Oür Lady, and his voice was so choked with awe that I had to put my hand to my ear to understand what he said—for you must know that I have grown a little deaf lately :

"I have given you my arm, Blessed Mary, so that you could clasp your Child against your breast. I have given you my good strong arm so that you could gather, under your wide blue mantle, all the poor people who wander forlorn in this world, those who hunger for bread, those who hunger for Charity, and those who hunger for Justice. It is but the coarse arm of a workman, but it used to serve me well. It will become, if you deign to take it, the arm which shelters and comforts the poor. The hand is but a rough, hard, bony hand, but it will become, at the end of your arm, the sweet tender hand which gathers the white lilies of chastity beside the stream of love."

Then the third one spoke in a clear, pure voice, the voice of a boy who might have sung in our church choir before the war broke out :

"I have given you my eyes, Jesus, so that you could see again with your baby's eyes the world as you have made it. (For it needs human eyes to look at human things and the eyes of

God are too bright for us ) They were good, keen eyes, they saved my life in mist and night, but I do not regret them They will save now the souls of many They used to dwell with pleasure on fields and skies and cottages and on the faces of the dear ones who are waiting for me at home They will see them no longer, but they will see you now, Jesu, my Lord, better, far better than before I have given you my eyes so that you could read in my heart and in the heart of my enemies, so that you could judge between us and bless the arms of those who are fighting for you "

As soon as the boy had stopped, the three got up with one accord, and they went away, just as they had come, the one-legged man leaning on the two others, without a look towards us, until the door closed behind them and we heard the faint noise of their steps dying away in the village street

The sacristan kept staring towards the door, his mouth wide open, his eyes standing out of his head I do not know why, I turned again towards the Holy Family Of course, you will not believe me, because Christmas is over, but, if you remember this story on Christmas Eve next year, you will understand that I took it as the most natural thing which could happen in this place, at this time If there had been any clock left, it would have struck midnight

Here it is then : I saw St. Joseph standing on his two legs, just as he used to stand before the war, and the Virgin clasping her Babe with her arm, just as she used to do before, and when I looked at Jesus He gazed straight at me. And, as He did so, I could swear that I saw His eyes move.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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